

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A process for preparing lactones by catalytic carbonylation of oxiranes, wherein a catalyst system comprising

- a) at least one cobalt compound as component A and
- b) at least one metal compound of the formula (I) as component B,



(I)

where

- M Al, Mg or Zn,
- R hydrogen or C₁₋₃₂-alkyl, C₂₋₂₀-alkenyl, C₃₋₂₀-cycloalkyl, C₆₋₁₈-aryl, C₇₋₂₀-aralkyl or C₇₋₂₀-alkaryl, where substituents may be present on the carbon atoms other than the carbon atom bound to M,
- X Cl, Br, I, sulfonate, oxide, C₁₋₃₂-alkoxide or amide,
- n is a number corresponding to the valence of M and
- x is in the range from 0 to n,

with n and x being selected so that the compound is uncharged,

is used as catalyst.

2. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the component A is selected so that a cobalt carbonyl compound is present under the reaction conditions.
3. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~, wherein the component B is AlCl_xR_{3-x} where x is from 0 to 3 and R is C₁₋₆-alkyl.
4. (Currently amended) A catalyst as defined in ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1 with the exception of the combination Al(C₂H₅)₃/Co(acac)₃.

5. (Original) A process for preparing catalysts as defined in claim 4 by mixing the components A and B.
6. (New) A process for preparing catalysts as defined in claim 1, wherein said at least one cobalt compound is octacarbonyldicobalt.
7. (New) A process for preparing catalysts as defined in claim 1, wherein said at least one metal compound of the formula (I) is trimethylaluminum, triethylaluminum, tri(sec-butyl)aluminum or triisopropoxyaluminum.
8. (New) A process for preparing catalysts as defined in claim 6, wherein said at least one metal compound of the formula (I) is trimethylaluminum, triethylaluminum, tri(sec-butyl)aluminum or triisopropoxyaluminum.